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Report details a W.Va. city's greenhouse footprint

June 23, 2014 by Ken Ward Jr.

There's [a new report out today](#) from the good folks at [Downstream Strategies](#) in which they try to inventory the greenhouse gas emissions of one West Virginia city: Morgantown. Here's the bottom line, from their press release:

Morgantown emitted 805,694 metric tons of greenhouse gases in 2012—most of which come from coal-fired power plants that supply electricity to the city's homes and businesses and from burning gas and diesel fuel in residents' cars and trucks.

The report, a year in the making, was funded by the Appalachian Stewardship Foundation and produced in partnership with the city of Morgantown and the Morgantown Municipal Green Team. It looked at five different emissions-generating activities, including use of electricity and on-road passenger and freight travel, as well as the use of fuel in residential and commercial stationary combustion equipment, use of energy in potable water and wastewater treatment and distribution, and generation of solid waste.

Jeff Simcoe, energy program project manager at Downstream Strategies, said:

As far as we know, this GHG inventory project represents the first of its kind within the state of West Virginia. A community-focused GHG inventory presents a broader picture of GHG operations than one focused just on government operations and provides a baseline against which the success of future programs and policies can be measured.

Not surprisingly, the report found:

... The magnitude of emissions generated from the Morgantown Energy Associates power plant, as compared to total activity-based emission results, is significant ... Source-based emissions from the Morgantown Energy Associates power plant are approximately three-quarters of total activity-based emissions calculated in this report ...

.. For source-based emissions, the Morgantown Energy Associates power plant should be the focus of efforts to reduce GHG emissions within the city limits. Although the local community and government do not directly control operations at the power plant, options can be explored that could influence electricity production and emission levels. In June 2014, USEPA proposed its Clean Power Plan rule, which requires GHG emission reductions from existing coal-fired power plants. This rule identifies four options: (1) heat rate improvements at individual power plants; (2) substituting generation from less carbon-intensive power plants such as natural gas units; (3) substituting generation from low- or zero-carbon generation such as solar, wind, or nuclear; and (4) implementing demand-side energy efficiency

But the report goes on to say:

This inventory has identified the two most important opportunities for GHG reductions in the Morgantown community: electricity use in the built environment and transportation. Easy actions might include turning off lights when not needed, changing to light bulbs that use less electricity, or driving more fuel-efficient vehicles.

This GHG inventory is important because it identifies GHG reduction opportunities and contains a large amount of information that can be leveraged by the Morgantown community to develop policies and programs to reduce GHG emissions. We recommend that the information contained within this report be referenced as the community and policy makers consider options. Besides energy conservation benefits that could be achieved by targeting sectors that consume large amounts of energy, non-energy benefits could also be realized through the same programs and policies. These additional, non-energy benefits include improved human health through reductions in air pollution as well as community economic benefits because Morgantown would be a more attractive place to live.

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 - [August 2013](#)
 - [July 2013](#)
 - [June 2013](#)
 - [May 2013](#)
 - [April 2013](#)
 - [March 2013](#)
 - [February 2013](#)
 - [January 2013](#)
 - [December 2012](#)
 - [November 2012](#)
 - [October 2012](#)
 - [September 2012](#)
 - [August 2012](#)
 - [July 2012](#)
 - [June 2012](#)
 - [May 2012](#)
 - [April 2012](#)
 - [March 2012](#)
 - [February 2012](#)
 - [January 2012](#)
 - [December 2011](#)

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- [October 2011](#)
- [September 2011](#)
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- [April 2011](#)
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- [January 2011](#)
- [December 2010](#)
- [November 2010](#)
- [October 2010](#)
- [September 2010](#)
- [August 2010](#)
- [July 2010](#)
- [June 2010](#)
- [May 2010](#)
- [April 2010](#)
- [March 2010](#)
- [February 2010](#)
- [January 2010](#)
- [December 2009](#)
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